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ABSTRACT

This report has two aims: (1) to stimulate discussion on issues, strategies, and possible activities at the international level relevant to the links between early childhood development and education and primary education; and (2) to gather additional ideas and information on relevant experiences and structures, to be included in a more comprehensive publication. Section 1, "Background," discusses access to primary education in developing countries and concerns about dropout rates and grade repetition. Section 2, "Early Childhood Development and Education," focuses on the role of early intervention programs in improving the progress and achievement of children in primary schools. Section 3, "Entrance into Primary School," discusses primary school entry as crucial for later success. Section 4, "The Rationale for Linking Early Childhood Development and Education," discusses the possibility of links between early and primary education programs in reducing underachievement, dropouts, and absenteeism, and considers various approaches to and expected outcomes of such linkages. Section 5, "Examples of Linked Programmes and Experiences," provides information on formal and nonformal program practices. Section 6, "Case Studies," describes programs in China, Denmark, France, Guyana, India, Morocco, and the United States. Section 7, "Policy Issues," considers several areas, including funding, curriculum, and administration. Section 8, "Conclusion," highlights the awareness of many nations that early intervention is more effective than later remedial measures. (Contains 52 references.) (KDFB)

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Links between Early Childhood Development and Education and Primary Education

U N E S C O

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UNESCO Activities in Early Childhood

Principle for action

Learning begins at birth. *(Article 5 - 1990 Jomtien World Declaration on Education for All)*

Early Childhood Care and Education is an integral part of basic education and represents the first and essential step in achieving the goals of Education-for-All. Recent world conferences testify to a growing appreciation of the crucial importance of the child's earliest years, and of the need to support families and communities in their role as the child's most influential educator. The learning capacity and value orientations of children are largely determined by the time the child reaches the age of formal schooling. For this reason, any sustained effort in Education for All must set targets and programmes for early childhood and attempt to raise the life-skills level of families.

Improving children's health and nutrition is necessary, but increasingly, in a situation where fourteen out of fifteen of the world's children survive until the age of one, governments and civil society are turning their attention to the psycho-social and cognitive development of children. Well conceived quality early childhood programmes help meet the diverse needs of young children during the crucial early years of life, enhance their readiness for schooling, have a positive and permanent influence on later schooling achievement. In addition, countries that succeed in mobilizing local government, municipalities, communities and voluntary organizations in the care and education of young children have been able to decentralise and innovate in their educational systems and, at the same time, make an important contribution toward population information and family education.

Goals and objectives

Within this context, UNESCO intervenes at various levels:

- at the interagency level, by participating in United Nations or other international initiatives in favour of children and families;
- at the intergovernmental level, by encouraging governments to integrate early childhood and family education programmes in their long-term social and economic planning;
- through technical assistance in the design, development and implementation of integrated early childhood programmes; as well as contributing to the improvement of the child development skills of parents and caregivers by encouraging child care information and education services, and community-based family support programmes;
- by acting as a networking centre and clearing-house on information about early childhood care and education systems, organizations, policies, programmes and activities.

UNESCO's Early Childhood and Family Education Unit

UNESCO's *Early Childhood and Family Education (ECF) Unit* co-ordinates research, activities and initiatives undertaken by UNESCO in early childhood care and education, parent and family education, and in favour of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It seeks to:

- improve access to early childhood care and education by making such programmes more widely available and accessible, and improving school-readiness;

- support family education and policy formulation by encouraging the participation and promoting the role of families and communities in basic education programmes;
- improve the content of early childhood programmes, in particular their design and quality.
- redirect and strengthen early childhood training programmes;
- strengthen the information base on early childhood by improving the availability and quality of information, research and data on young children and their families;
- promote legislation on behalf of children and families, in particular the Convention on the Rights of the Child, through awareness raising and advocacy;
- collaborate in artistic, intellectual and cultural events promoting reflection onchildhood and family issues.

Early Childhood Interventions

With the help of its specialized services, its roster of consultants, its partnership with sister agencies of the United Nations - in particular UNICEF and WHO - and the co-operation of major institutes and NGOs, UNESCO provides various services to its Member States, UN Agencies, foundations, organizations and individuals working in favour of children and families. Some of its activities include:

- supporting early childhood development/family education programmes in the Middle East, the Pacific, Latin America and South East Asia;
- publishing information and research results on early childhood topics, such as:
  - *Enhancing the Skills of Early Childhood Trainers*, a training pack for the training of trainers produced with the Bernard van Leer Foundation
  - *Toward a Fair Start for Children: Programming for Early Childhood Care and Developement in the Developing World* by Dr Robert Myers, already published in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Hindi, Indonedian, Russian, Portuguese, Spanish and Thai.
- creating graduate-level diplomas in early childhood in selected universities in Brazil, with the Centre International de l'Enfance;
- sponsoring sub-regional training workshops for administrators in policy and organization of informal early childhood development systems in the Pacific, Africa and the Middle East;
- strengthening or establishing regional Early Childhood Co-operating Centres in Europe and Francophone Africa;
- undertaking a national inventory of early childhood resources in Burkina Faso to reinforce national capacity and potential in the care and education of young children.

Family Education and Early Childhood Development

Systemic early child development programmes are an excellent investment for States, in that they raise significantly the health and educational levels of young children and allow women to enter the labour market. Children, however, always need the security and orientation which the home provides, nor should it be forgotten that societies are founded on the quality of the homes and families of which they are composed. Family education

- provides parents with the necessary knowledge and skills to raise their children successfully;
- builds up self-reliance, networking and social consciousness among parents.

Member States have much to gain from promoting family education. In situations where it is impossible to set up early childhood, centre-based programmes funded by the State, excellent child care and education can be provided through educating parents and supporting

their initiatives at community level. UNESCO recommends State support for family education not only as a fruitful investment in children but also as a means of raising the educational level of a country as a whole. In a context dominated by rapid social change and by the expansion of scientific and technological knowledge, parent education is a first step toward supporting community development and education. In the past three years, the Organization has supported over twenty different projects in Member States worldwide focusing on the development and education of families and young children.

Children's Rights Initiatives

The Articles of the Convention which present a particular challenge to UNESCO are those relating to education (Articles 27, 28 and 29) and culture (Articles 12, 13, 14, 17, 28, 29, 30 and 31). UNESCO promotes the Convention on the Rights of the Child by :

- acting as a focal point for enquiries concerning the Convention, sending out literature and attempting to attend the more important meetings on the Convention convened by the United Nations and NGOs;
- providing assistance to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in monitoring the Convention, in particular as it relates to education and culture.
- helping to translate the Convention into national languages.
- contracting original materials on the Convention, especially publications and booklets prepared for or by young children.
- assisting governments and non-governmental organizations in publishing children's versions of the Convention and guidebooks for teachers;
- co-sponsoring meetings on the Rights of the Child with the International Institute for Human Rights Studies (Trieste), the UN Centre for Human Rights (Geneva), the Arab Institute of Human Rights;
- co-operating with UNICEF on matters pertaining to the Convention, within the framework of early childhood education;

Early Childhood Information/Documentation Activities

To create opportunities for institutions and individuals to learn about each other's needs and actions, enhance information exchange on early childhood, and build up active relationships to benefit young children and their families, UNESCO:

- collects, compiles and disseminates basic information on early childhood care and education systems, organizations and curricula.
- maintains a data bank of early childhood care and education information.
- produces practical directories, publications, briefs and reports on early childhood care and education systems, organizations, curricula or policies.
- provides input into, and support for, selected professional journals and reviews, such as the Interagency Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development's *Coordinator's Notebook*.

Further enquiries

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Note to readers

This document attempts to describe some of the efforts that are being made in different parts of the world to strengthen the links needed in the earliest years of development and education - links with the home, the community, primary schools, etc ... . It is intended to stimulate interest in this area and to encourage the exchange of information on the approaches and strategies being used, as well as illustrating the « lessons learnt ».

Special emphasis is given to the rationale and examples of actions to develop linkages. Examples are not limited to the cases cited here and many more, no doubt, exist which have not yet been documented. Hence readers are encouraged to forward to UNESCO's Early Childhood and Family Education Unit any additional initiatives and their evaluation undertaken in this area.

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Links between Early Childhood Development and Education and Primary Education

Introduction

It is universally recognized that the positive growth, learning and development of children depend on the quality of their early childhood experiences. It follows therefore that it is equally important to recognize this fact and develop its role and links with the later stages of education, in particular with primary education.

Thus the aims of this document are:

a) to stimulate discussion on issues, strategies and possible activities at the international level relevant to the topic;

b) to gather additional ideas and information on relevant experiences and structures, to be included in a more comprehensive publication.

This document is composed of various sections namely:

a) Background

b) Early Childhood Development and Education

c) Entrance into primary school

d) The rationale for linking early childhood development and education

e) Examples of linked programmes and experiences

f) Case studies

g) Policy Issues

h) Conclusion

i) Bibliography

Special emphasis is given to the rationale and examples of actions to develop linkages. Examples are not limited to the cases cited here and many more, no doubt, exist which have not yet been documented. Hence readers are encouraged to forward to UNESCO any additional initiatives and their evaluation undertaken in this area.

Background

Considerable progress has been made in the provision of primary education during the last 40 years, though in the 80s many developing countries experienced economic problems which resulted in a reduction of resources for education. Access to schooling and enrollment have more than doubled in that time and drop-out rates have fallen in many countries. But there are no grounds for complacency. In a number of countries drop-out rates are rising, teachers are discouraged and deprived children are denied their legitimate right to education. Meanwhile donor agencies experience greater difficulty in providing assistance to the education sector because of financial considerations. In such circumstances governments search for new strategies for the provision of educational services.

There are valid reasons for concern as well as for reflection and action. Primary education must be subject to further scrutiny. In sub-Saharan Africa, 20 percent or more children in primary schools repeat at least one grade. In Latin America, the figure is about 10-15 percent and it is almost 10 percent in other developing countries. Repetition is highest in the first grades but is more significant in the first grade. For most students repetition is the first

fatal step towards dropping out of school. Latin American countries, for example, spend US$ 4.2 billion each year to teach their 20 million repeaters. This occurs despite increases in expansion, access and coverage in primary schools. (EFA Report: Status and Trends, UNESCO 1993)

Profile of repeaters

While children from all social and economic groups repeat classes, the most disadvantaged students are the worst affected. Street children and orphans may be without either family or school assistance. Others are children from deprived families living in isolated rural areas and the children of indigenous groups speaking their own mother tongue and not the language of the school. Repeaters also include children with learning disabilities, e.g. dyslexia, poor eyesight, hearing problems, etc , all of which lead to learning difficulties. Very often nutritional deficiencies, poor health, infections and diseases are other major handicaps to progress in schooling.

In his book *Malnutrition and Infection in the Classroom* (1990), Pollitt highlights the fact that nutritional deficiencies and poor health in primary school children are among the causes of low school enrolments, absenteeism, early dropouts and under achievement in learning. He further points out that the health, nutrition and education of children are not independent factors in a child's life. They interact with each other throughout their lives. Furthermore poor nutrition and ill health during pre-school years can have long term implications for the child's later progress at school. Present evidence shows that inadequate nutrition and ill health are critically important to the school learning process and school aptitudes. School-based nutrition and health interventions can result in improvements in the efficiency of the education systems of many developing countries.

Another significant factor common to children who repeat classes is related to their initial lack of readiness for learning in reading, writing, numercy and language acquisition as well as unpreparedness for entry into primary schools. Usually too, they have no reading materials at home. Their parents are probably illiterate or have had no more than primary education and are impoverished. Thus these parents are unable to give their children the help they need.

Older siblings, in particular girls, stay at home to care for their younger sisters and brothers. Many children, too, are expected to work part-time to supplement the family's income and to help with harvesting. Thus absences from school are inevitable, thus leading to repetition and eventual dropping out of school.

A more pronounced characteristic of children who repeat is that they have no adequate positive early childhood development and educational experiences before they enter primary school.

Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE)

While the importance of early stimulation is constantly cited, the harsh reality is that the needs of millions of children in their formative years are not met. These include their care and stimulation, the identification and the correction of a variety of problems related to health, nutrition, physical and mental handicaps, pre-reading, pre-writing and pre-numercy skills, the development of the joy of exploration, experimentation, a heightened sense of curiosity, a love for learning and motivation etc.. Thus to ignore ECDE of children before thier entry into primary education is to jeoparidize their educational success at the later levels of learning and education.

ECDE experiences are provided not only in institutions but also in non-institutional settings such as the home, the yard, the community. A variety of strategies are used such as parent support and education, home visiting, community iniatives, day care centres, health centres, nurseries, kindergartens, pre-schools, television, a combination of some of these etc..

Research and experience have repeatedly demonstrated that Early Childhood Development and Education can, not only increase the progress and achievement of children in

primary schools and lay the foundation for future growth, learning and development, but also develop positive attitudes and the desire to learn.In an international review of early intervention programmes in many countries of the world, Myers, in his book *The Twelve Who Survive* (1992), summarizes some evidence as follows:

- Early intervention programmes, more often than not, have a positive effect on the probability of enrolment, on school progress (as represented by repetition and dropout rates and by grades), and on achievement in the early years of primary school. The effects can be very great.
- The mechanisms producing progress in enrolment and performance in primary school appear to reflect a combination of earlier age enrolment (which regularizes progress through the system), improved cognitive skills, and changes in parental expectations regarding the ability of their children and/or the importance of schooling.
- Structural conditions and the quality of primary schooling can moderate the potential effects of improved school readiness, on school progress and performance.
- Poor children and those from social groups that have been discriminated against may benefit more than their privileged peers from multifaceted early intervention programmes.
- There may be gender differences in the programme effects, helping girls to catch up with boys in circumstances where access to primary schooling is wanting.

However it is vitally important to sustain gains and benefits provided by Early Childhood Care and Education and to ensure that they are not wasted, diminished or eliminated by subsequent inappropriate action or inaction. Continuity and linkages must be maintained, so that success in reducing failures and drop outs will be achieved. Against this background a closer look must be taken at the readiness of children for schooling.

Entrance into primary school

The child's first entry into primary school, whether at age 5, 6 or 7, is a crucial and deciding factor for later success. For those children who have had no previous experience of Early Childhood Development and Education initiatives, this may be their first contact with a setting where they are grouped together with other children and supervised by a teacher. At this age they learn mainly through play and some may not be ready to acquire skills needed by fully fledged primary school children. Some anxiety and insecurity will be associated with their first entry in the primary school with its more specific demands and its more impersonal atmosphere. For some children the new circumstance of being at school may be so disturbing or intolerable that it is reflected in their ability to respond to the intellectual demands made on them (Wall, Constructive Education, 1975).

Beside the cognitive differences in children, there are many temperamental differences which influence their capacity to adapt to the demands of schooling. The environment also plays a direct role in the child's cognitive and emotional development which conditions his/her ability and willingness to learn. Thus children entering primary schools are heterogeneous in all aspects of their development and attitudes. Equal access to primary school does not mean that all children are equal at the point of entry. Hence the realities of children's differences and more particularly the wide variations among different social, economic and cultural groups, should be taken into account, understood and considered, if positive outcomes are to be achieved.

These differences may, also, be complicated by differences between the mother tongue, between language which is a matter of different "codes" in different socio-economic strata and the language of the school which are found in many countries of the world. Such conflicts may lead to learning difficulties or failure as well as to eventual dropping out of school.

While it is legitimate for schools to make certain demands on children, it is also necessary for schools to be realistic and to make certain adjustments or even major changes especially in the methodology and curricula used, so that children do develop, learn and achieve. But such adjustments made by the schools are more likely to be successful if they take into account and

build upon the earlier experiences of the children. Thus a smooth transition of children to primary schools will be facilitated; failure and dropout will be reduced.

Whatever efforts the schools may make on behalf of children may be wasted if there are misunderstandings, conflicts, or opposition to the home. Parents are, after all, their children's first and most important educator. They must not, therefore, be ignored. Their insights, cooperation and knowledge must be tapped and intelligently used. They then become important partners in the educational process. Furthermore, while children go to school, they also return to their homes every day, to an environment which exerts considerable influence over their growth, learning and development. Hence it is counter-productive to ignore the home environment and to neglect its role in complementing and in reinforcing the work of the school in the promotion of the harmonious, holistic development of children as well as achieving the aims of education.

The recruitment of skilful and resourceful trained teachers is essential to reach this goal. Unfortunately many schools, especially in the developing countries, do not or cannot provide the kind of teachers needed. Often teachers are poorly trained or not trained at all. In fact the least qualified teachers tend to teach the initial classes. In addition teachers may be engaged in other activities to supplement their meagre income. Consequently they may be frequently absent from their work. They often lack motivation especially when they are faced with overcrowded classes, a lack of educational materials and work in dilapidated buildings badly in need of repair and with leaking roofs. Moreover teachers are often assigned to jobs far from their homes, where they may not be able to speak the local language and are unfamiliar with the local culture.

Another important obstacle is the widespread use of a centrally determined curriculum which does not permit the teacher to adapt either its contents or the methods of teaching to the social, economic, cultural background and needs of the community served by the school.

The rationale for linking Early Childhood Development and Education and Primary Education

The main purpose of linking early childhood development and education and primary education is to ensure that there is a smooth transition for children from one level of learning to another. It must also be designed to stimulate children's interest in learning, to prepare them for further stages in the educational process, to ensure that certain basic skills are mastered and to do so in accordance with the child's mental and physical development. This is necessary in order to help to reduce failures in achievement and to help children to adjust to the environment and demands of schools. It is equally important to ensure that schools are ready for children.

In the earlier stages of learning there is an emphasis on play, for it is through play that the young child learns, develops and interacts with other children. Attention is also given to foundation skills, such as pre-readiness skills in reading, writing and numeracy as well as on language development, before the child is subsequently exposed to the more formal learning experiences. A gradual and smooth transition from one stage of learning to another is essential to promote achievement in the primary school.

It is therefore necessary for continuity to be maintained between the two stages of development and education to avoid wastage, under-achievement, drop-outs and absenteeism.

When the linkage is inadequate, problems may arise which militate against success in learning at the primary level of education. These include the child's inability to adjust to the primary school environment, a failure to master the 3 R,s and to keep up with the curriculum. Children with disabilities related to health, nutrition, physical and mental inadequacies may also suffer unnecessarily unless these are detected and treated during these crucial stages of learning.

It is for these reasons that greater emphasis is now being given by Member Statea, to linkages between early childhood and primary education, to the approaches required and to the organization needed. Many innovations are now being introduced in educational programmes in this regard. But it is recognized that governments and educational institutions alone cannot

solve all the problems that may be met. Parents, families, communities and the private sector all have a crucial role to play.

Approaches and expected outcomes of linkages

Some of the approaches and organized endeavours which focus on Early Childhood Development and Education and Primary Education linkages are characterized by flexibility, collaboration and realism. They, among others, highlight one or a combination of the following:

Approaches

- Assistance to teachers at the Early Childhood Care and Education and primary levels to enable them to carry out their work and meet their responsibilities by ensuring better understanding and cooperation in the achievement of common goals
- Improved training and preparation of teachers for their professional work
- Closer collaboration and cooperation with parents and the community to benefit from their contribution to the educational process
- Assistance in the preparation of schools for children, e. g. in terms of appropriate materials, equipment, buildings, organizational structures, staffing, curriculum, etc.
- The development of appropriate policies and legislation to ensure the achievement of educational goals
- Development and/or contribution to local initiatives in providing good quality Early Childhood Care and Education services which focus on care, health, nutrition and education.

Expected outcomes

- The smooth transition of children from early childhood experiences to primary schools
- The improved preparation of children for primary education especially in the development of basic skills such as reading, writing, numeracy and language learning.
- The detection, treatment, correction, improvement and prevention of nutritional, health, physical or mental defects and the early removal of learning difficulties
- The development of positive attitudes, self-confidence, motivation and ability to learn which are conducive to the child's development, happiness and success at school
- The reduction of drop-outs and failures at the primary level of education
- The reduction of educational expenditure in particular by removing the need for remedial measures
- The development of capable children who will eventually contribute to a society of educated, responsible and productive citizens.

Examples of linked programmes and experiences

Many examples have been found in the study of practical measures - both formal and non-formal - which have been taken to link early childhood development and education to primary education. For example, in 1990, UNESCO sent a questionnaire to all Member States to gather information for a publication entitled a *World Survey of Early Childhood Care and Education* (Fisher, 1991).

An analysis of the answers received concerning linkages revealed that the following methods are used:

Training/experience of ECDE and primary school personnel

In this category there are various approaches. For example, in Cyprus, while all foundation and theoretical courses are similiar for both levels of learning, training for ECCE is specialized, i.e. in methodology and school management. In Trinidad and Tobago, training for teaching in ECDE establishments is an elective in Teacher Training Colleges. In New Zealand, training is specific to each level but all are trained by the same staff in the same institutions and use the same facilities. The teaching staff of French nursery schools receive the same training and this qualifies them to teach at either level.

In a national project in Saudi Arabia for the development of Early Childhood Care and Education emphasising, among other things, the qualitative training of teachers and curriculum development, some primary schools have benefited from the resource/training centre in Jeddah. There, primary school teachers were given some training in the use of the pre-school curriculum. This offered an opportunity to the teachers to link the primary school curriculum to this one.

In some countries primary school teachers spend some time working and observing in ECCE institutions, thus fortifying their knowledge of better preparing the primary school programme for the future students from the ECCE institutions. The same objective is achieved in Portugal where there is an exchange of teachers between the two levels of learning.

Teachers follow students in the first two grades in some countries. There is also cooperative team teaching in kindergartens with the involvement of primary school teachers. Cooperative team teaching in Denmark divides kindergarten classes into small groups and both primary school teachers and pre-school teachers are responsible for the work of the groups. The entire team of teachers is responsible for the planning of the programme.

Supervision

In some countries, e.g. France, the same supervisors are responsible for ECCE and primary levels of learning.

Curriculum

There is a national curriculum for the ECCE level which continues into the primary level. It includes different activities for children according to their ages.

In some countries changes are made in the primary school curriculum including language adjustment since the language in ECCE settings including the home may be different from that of the primary school.

Physical location

ECDE classes in some settings are housed in or are found in the same compound as primary schools. This facilitates parents, or older childen who attend the primary school, to leave and pick up younger children at these ECDE centres. Special pre-school classes are established in primary schools in New Zealand, where children are, for various reasons, unlikely to be enrolled in ECDE services and where they are not able to take full advantage of the usual junior school programme when they come to school at five years of age, because of their limited previous experience.

Programmes

Several programmes are common to the kindergarten and primary schools, e.g. in Israel. In Bolivia "remedial" programmes have been established in the first months of primary school. Another approach is to hold remedial classes in the summer. These programmes facilitate learning at the primary level of education.

In the Philippines, children from the rural areas who have had no ECDE experiences are given eight weeks of pre-school education at the beginning of first grade when they first enter primary school. The mother tongue is the language of the class and focus is on readiness for primary education.

Children in some Latin American countries are allowed to go to school for some time as "oyentes" (listeners) before entering school the following year. Thus they experience a foretaste of schooling.

Transition/preparatory classes

There are transition/preparatory classes between the two levels in the Congo and in Thailand. In Colombia the year "Zero" has been created which precedes the first class of primary education. Sri Lanka has extended downwards,i.e. to age five and has transformed this first year of schooling into a kindergarten class. These actions are aimed at fostering a smooth transition into the primary level of learning, contributing to the quality of education, ensuring more success at the primary level etc..

The Centre for Research and Development in Chili, in cooperation with the Van Leer Foundation, launched a project in the Municipality of Conchali, for children in marginal areas. The objective is to improve the quality of the first two years of primary school and make parents, pre- and primary school teachers as well as the community join forces to ensure a smooth transition from pre-school to primary school. The strategies used include: focus on children's stimulation and the relationship with parents and caregivers; encouragement of parents' and teachers' awareness of the specific needs of children during their transition from home to school; development of pedagogical and teaching materials which are based on the daily life experiences of the children; production of quality data based on case studies of the childrens' home-school interactions and evaluation.

Promotion

Transfers from one class/level to another are determined according to the presumed readinessof the child,or through psychological tests and interviews, in certain countries. The Congo, Ireland, Mozambique and Senegal are examples of countries where children, having completed the ECCE level of education automatically i.e. regardless of age or readiness of the children-enter the primary level. In Ecuador, Jordan, Kuwait, Malta, the Syrian Arab Republic children are placed in classes of both levels according to their age.

Parent education

An initiative taken in China is the creation of over 200,000 community based education programmes for parents. The curriculum focuses on the inter-action between physical, psycho-social and nutritional aspects of development. Prepared in collaboration with the communities themselves, the programme is integrated into pre-sc' ools, primary schools or in conjunction with periodic medical visits (UNICEF Summary Report: Measuring the Psychological Development of Young Children, 1993).

In Saint Vincent and the Grenadines many pre-school teachers attempt to teach specific skills and information to meet primary teachers' and parents' expectations. This often becomes the primary focus for children of four years of age. Parents want their children to be ready for primary schools and are usually anxious to enroll their children in pre-schools that teach writing and reading and use a formal school approach. The problem however is to persuade parents to use those programmes that attempt to cater more for the development of the "whole" child rather than the teaching of reading and writing. Thus encouragement is given primarily by the relevant staff of the ECCE Unit of the Ministry of Education, a few pre-school teachers, through Child Month activities and the Pre-School Services Committee.

Visits

ECCE pupils visit their future primary schools

Staggered entrance

The entrance into primary school, in some countries, is staggered in accordance with the child's readiness.

Child to Child

Since 1992 the Centre of Information and Support for Health in Nicaragua, has been implementing a "Child to Child" approach to early childhood health and development, by using the target group of children who look after their younger siblings, and school teachers. The organization's main strategies include: the training of para-professionals and professionals in child care and community development; trainiing of children and adolescents in nutrition, health and child stimulation; awareness raising among organizations; advocate for cooperation among organizations involved in community development; developing training materials as well as audiovisual materials for dissemination. (Van Leer Annual Review 1993)

Home-based intervention

In six townships around Capetown, South Africa, the Western Cape Foundation for Community Work in collaboration with the Van Leer Foundation started a project focusing on home visitors, child minders and children. Its aims are : to develop and operate a home-based intervention approach; to develop a common vision of alternatives to certre-based work, in collaboration with other initiatives and to advocate for ECD.

The project uses the strategies of reinforcing and building on the knowledge of parents and care givers, developing mutual support and networking between communities and partner agencies, providing multi-disciplinary training, monitoring of activities, creating self-support groups and providing documentation. (Van Leer Foundation Annual Review 1993)

Case studies

China : The Joint Innovative Project (JIP) in Ganzu Province

In 1986 the Chinese Government announced a national plan whereby, by the end of the century, all Chinese children would receive nine years of compulsory schooling. Each province was left to decide how best to meet this objective basing its approach on the needs of its population.

In 1986 Ganzu province in Northwest China, with a terrain which includes humid far ıland, desert and high plateaux, about 80 per cent of the population live in rural areas. In recent years, the province has fallen behind in social and economic development and has often experienced food shortages. The enrolment rate in primary school was 10 per cent below that of the national average. The 1984 statistics showed that only four in ten children finished primary school. Faced with the Government's plan for education, Ganzu Province turned to the Joint Innovative Project (JIP).

Developed by UNESCO's Principal Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (PROAP) and the University of Western Australia, the JIP aims at increasing the achievement level of children in primary schools in Asia. Ganzu province was accepted in the programme in April 1986 after a visit by Chinese provincial officials to Thailand and Pakistan to observe the JIP in action.

The JIP framework

JIP was founded on the assumption that there are four leading factors in the under achievement of children in Asia - the lack of preparation for schooling, irrelevant teaching materials, the poor quality of teachers and low community involvement. To combat these problems the JIP developed four approaches: the provision of increased access to pre-school education, improved teaching materials and methods of teaching, improved training for teachers and increased community involvement.

Pre-school training

The isolation experienced by children in rural areas often makes them ill-prepared for entry into primary schools because they lack the necessary social skills. In addition, they have often had little exposure to literacy or numeracy and begin primary school without a background in these skills but are still expected to make rapid progress in learning. This often leads to frustration and eventually to a rejection of the school. However, when children have already been exposed to concepts and given an opportunity to develop social skills, they enter primary school with both realistic expectations and the capacity to learn.

Recognizing the importance of pre-school education, Ganzu province officials made improved access to pre-schools possible by investing in the establishment of more pre-schools throughout the province. Access then increased from 57.6 per cent in 1986 to 85 per cent in 1988. To complement these new institutions parents were trained in the concepts of pre-school education and were encouraged to assist in the development of literacy and numeracy in the home. This provided children with further preparation for entry into school and increased parental involvement in education and helped them to understand better how children learn.

Moving beyond 'Chalk and Talk'

One criticism of the educational methodology used by the teachers of Ganzu province was that it centred on lecturing from the blackboard in a teacher-centred style rather than on the use of active learning methods involving the pupils. The JIP introduced teachers to innovative methods which encouraged the more active participation of the children. Teachers were also encouraged to study the curriculum and bring their own experiences into their teaching. Out-of-school activities were another means of making the learning experiences relevant to needs.

In order to increase their resource materials teachers visited other schools in order to exchange ideas. They taught one another how to make visual aids with low-cost materials. With the help of the JIP staff, they began to publish a weekly instructional newsletter in order to disseminate innovative ideas. This ensured that teachers were well-informed and motivated.

Improving skills

Although the innovative ideas helped to improve their methods of teaching, it was still necessary to improve the overall standard of teaching. Of 120,000 teachers in the schools, only 70 per cent had received four years of secondary training. The Satellite Education Centre was then established so that teachers could complete the necessary training. Some 5,000 have done so.

Mobilizing community efforts

The goal of Ganzu province was for the schools to become focal points for the community. Rather than viewing schools as restricted areas, officials began to welcome parents and members of the community to them. Family visits were arranged, school boards were established, parent-teacher cards were created to help keep parents informed of their children's progress and parent schools were set up to encourage further development.

All these activities led to an increased understanding of how children learn and a greater interest in giving support to the schools. Among the 100 project schools a total of 500,000 yuan was donated by community organizations and individuals towards the improvement of facilities, teacher training and other project activities.

Thus this project demonstrated success by implementing specific actions. It also illustrated meaningful linkages between ECDE and primary education by focusing on the inter-relatedness of mobilizing and involving communities, parents, teachers (through improvement of their knowledge and skills), to respond better to the developmental and educational needs of children

The JIP expands

The JIP began in 1986 with schools in Ganzu province. As a result of its success in preparing students for primary education, in improving teacher techniques and in increasing community interest in education, the JIP has expanded to 1,000 schools in five provinces. Although the four main directions of the project are followed, each province has tailored its activities to meet the particular needs of its schools.

Denmark : Co-ordinated school start and afternoon care

The ways in which children are admitted to and begin their experience of primary school have changed recently. In 1989 the government passed a law that gave local schools, in close co-operation with parents, the possibility of organizing a 'co-ordinated school start'. This means that the kindergarten classes for the five to six year olds and grades 1 and 2 of the primary schools work closely together. The purpose of this co-ordinated school start is to provide better continuity for the children and a meaningful, relevant curriculum, which is not divided according to subjects. The ultimate goal for teachers of grades 1 and 2 should be the development of a holistic, meaningful education for children that differs from the one used in the past. Co-operative team teaching divides kindergarten classes into small groups, with both primary school teachers and pre-school teachers responsible for the work of the groups. The entire team of teachers has responsibility for the planning of the programme.

These changes in policy and practice which moved away from traditional school entry procedures in the early years of primary schooling were based on observations which showed that children do not mature at the same time and were not all ready for substantial change in teaching methods. It was also noted that the achievement of learning of children in the five to nine age group required more varied approaches. Various teaching and learning methods needed to be used, including systematic and structured learning, personally chosen activities and concrete experiences as a starting point (Vilien 1990).

Ninety-five per cent of all children of 5 to 6 years of age attend kindergarten class and if the number per class exceeds 28 children, it is divided into two. Further, if there are more than 22 children in a class, the teacher is assisted by another teacher. The average number of children in a primary class is usually about twenty. At present 50 per cent of all schools have moved to the innovative type of co-ordinated school start described above (Danish Teachers' Union 1989).

France : Continuity between pre-school and primary education

The Circular of 4 October 1977 proposed that better continuity between nursery and primary phases of education would be enhanced through, among other things, a mixed teaching force, the 'maternelle' having hitherto been the preserve of women. This measure was universally welcomed but in fact few men joined this branch of teaching except for some appointed to more senior posts.

The Education Act of 10 July 1989 and later decrees concerning its application (6 September 1990), were related to the organization and running of primary teaching (l'enseignement élémentaire) and of the nursery school system now called 'pré-élémentaire', (although this name is rarely used in practice). These set out 'cycles of apprenticeship', determined according to the psychological and physiological development of each child. The second cycle, called the 'apprentissages fondamentaux' (fundamental, or basic, learning cycle), involves children aged 5 in the nursery school and those aged 6 and 7 years in the primary school. The third cycle, called the 'period of consolidation' or 'd'approfondissement' covers the last three years of primary school.

The aim is to try to prevent some children from repeating years of schooling, or, when this is inevitable, to prolong one period or stage for a particular child and create a better continuity in educational experience.

The inclusion of the last year of the 'maternelle' in the stage which includes the first two years of primary schooling links the two types of school. This is facilitated by the creation of teaching teams and by doubling the staff in each school. Consultations, made possible by freeing staff from classroom responsibilities for one hour a week enable the teaching team to define together the levels of each stage, to discuss progress and determine the conditions needed for each pupil to satisfy the requirements of the cycle.

The cycle of first apprenticeship, from 2 to 5 years, covers an important period of dramatic development in children. As a result of careful observation the first indications of any delay or difficulties can thus be detected and appropriate action taken.

A further indication of the integration of the nursery and primary phases of education can be seen in changes in the supervisory system. For fifteen years there have been progressive moves towards the combination of nursery inspections with those of the primary sector, and in 1990 the inspectorate endorsed the inclusion of the 'écoles maternelles'. This also implies a need for inspectors and their pedagogical advisory assistants to work at two levels. Furthermore, it means that expertise in nursery schooling alone is replaced by the need for competence in the work of both sectors, if a first-class education is to be provided.

The teaching team

The teaching staff of French nursery schools are qualified professionals with the same status, salary, duties and training as those working in primary schools. They may teach at either level throughout their careers. In the past they were trained in colleges (écoles normales d'instituteurs). Since the academic year 1991/1992, they have been educated in university institutes (IUFM - Instituts Universitaires de Formation des Maîtres) where parts of the course are common for students of all levels and regardless of whether they will ultimately teach in nursery, primary or secondary schools. For the rest, they cover courses specifically geared to work with the primary and nursery age groups. Students are admitted to these courses after a three-year degree course and the length of their teacher education and training is for a further two years. They may be awarded grants to help cover their costs, for example living allowances during their period of study, or the reimbursement of travel expenses.

Guyana 1 : Early childhood transition activities

Since 1976, early childhood education has arrested the attention of policy-makers and the general public in Guyana. In fact, it has gained a high degree of momentum, which has been evidenced, particularly, in the area of human resource development.

In the ten administrative regions and in the capital Georgetown, nursery and primary schools are involved in activities to facilitate the transition from the nursery to primary schools and to define the underlying principles of early childhood education. These exercises include:

- regular workshops for nursery teachers;
- visits by second-year pupils of nursery schools to primary schools, during the final term of the academic year;
- the merger of Prep A (first class of primary school) and nursery teachers at specified nursery workshops to discuss prerequisite skills and expectations of the Pre a entrants;
- visits by Prep A teachers to observe the second-year nursery pupils "at work";
- assistance to parents at Parent Action Committee meetings to understand the Prep A programme;
- at graduation ceremonies, prize-giving activities and school-closing exercises, speakers are encouraged to address parents about their roles and responsibilities for the psychological preparation of their children for entry to primary school;

- the encouragement of teachers of Preps A and B to ensure that they provide a stimulating classroom environment which closely resembles the nursery school setting. For example, the presence of manipulative toys,interest corners, basic charts (weather, days of the week, colour and number), large clear and colourful pictures and the allied arts;
- meetings of clusters of schools and level committees, to identify difficulties in classroom performance and to arrive at workable solutions, especially in the area of methodology.

Difficulties encountered

Despite the implementation of the foregoing activities, a few difficulties have been identified based on observations made during visits to primary schools, namely:

- a significant number of repeaters in Preps A and B;
- lack of vertical integration and continuity in planning;
- placement of inexperienced teachers in preparatory classes;
- over-crowded classes with disproportionate teacher/pupil ratio;
- multi-grade settings with persons untrained to teach in these situations;
- evidence of parents, continuing to paint a "frightening" picture of primary school to their children.

In the light of the above difficulties, it was imperative that the Early Childhood Programme be institutionalized in order to facilitate a smoother transition from the nursery to the primary school level. In fact, the Ministry of Education, Social Development and Culture has made a conscious effort to mount intensive training programmes which have heightened the awareness of early childhood education which is being extended from the nursery level to the Primary One (Level Three) in our primary schools.

The way forward

In order to ensure that the concept of early childhood education and transition from nursery to primary level is understood, three approaches have been planned:

- workshops for teachers of Preps A and B, and orientation of head teachers of primary school;
- as an outcome of the workshops for prep teachers, one hundred trained teachers will be selected to receive further coaching as Field Officers so that the implementation of the ECE at the primary level can be closely monitored. This training is scheduled to start in September 1995;
- a public awareness programme is geared to help parents and the general public understand and appreciate their roles and responsibilities in the implementation of the Early Childhood Education programme.

The ultimate goal of these programmes is to improve the quality of education at the nursery and primary levels.

In fact, the workshops for the teachers of Preps A and B have already been conducted in some regions. Approximately 400 teachers have benefitted from the following courses:

- the infant school curriculum;
- related theories and principles;
- links with teaching (planning, implementation, evaluation);
- the child in focus;
- establishing the infant school environment;
- the creative arts and the young child;
- records and record-keeping in the infant department;
- the infant class time-table;
- the integrated approach;

- transition from the nursery to the primary level;
- preparation for the new school term;
- production of instructional materials.

Conclusion

It is worthy of note that a significant number of the participants have mastered the concept, spirit and importance of early childhood practices.

Guyana 2 : Improvement of primary education

Formative and summative evaluations reveal that the level of achievement of many primary school students is unsatisfactory. For example, the results of the most recent Secondary Schools Entrance Examination (SSEE) revealed that less than twenty-five per cent of the students attained a fifty per cent mark in four core subjects (language, mathematics, science, social studies). This poor performance at the primary level starts in the earliest grades. Data show that while the overall level of wastage at the primary level is not very high (about 5 to 7%), the level of repetition at Grade 1 or Preparatory A is unacceptably high, (between 11 and 15%). This early experience of failure at the primary level is partly responsible for the disenchantment of pupils with the education process. The situation is exacerbated as teachers concentrate in subsequent grades on drilling students to pass the SSEE. To quote a 1983 UNESCO Sector Study, "education in Guyana is exam-driven rather than child-centred".

Officials in the Ministry of education and Cultural Development (MOECD) believe that this unsatisfactory performance stems from several factors. Among the most important are:

- severe shortage of teaching/learning materials (including textbooks and learning aids);
- a significant number of inexperienced, unqualified and untrained teachers;
- inappropriate teaching methods;
- poor physical conditions including inadequate furniture, poor or non-existent sanitation facilities and dilapidated buildings.

The rehabilitation of the physical plant, improvement of sanitary facilities and the furnishing of schools are being being supported by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the European Community, the SIMAP Agency and the Futures Fund. While much remains to be done the needs in this area are being addressed in a consistent manner. More emphasis is, therefore, being placed on material development and teacher training.

The first two agencies mentioned above are assisting in these two areas but more consistent and innovative efforts are needed.

At a recent meeting of senior education officials a decision was taken that the first two grades of primary education are to be regarded as part of early childhood education. This decision is aimed at reinforcing in teachers the need for establishing pleasant and comfortable learning environments, stimulating materials and interesting child-centred activities. As a first step, the Ministry will clearly identify and document the knowledge and skills that the average child should demonstrate at each grade and level (including the nursery one). The curriculum materials and teaching methodologies are to be refined and reformed based on Step 1. This project is aimed at training or retraining teachers and teacher supervisors in the new approaches expected of them.

Objectives

To improve the quality of education offered at the primary level, through the training and retraining of teachers in relevant content and methodologies. More specifically:

- to train teachers of Prep A and B classes (Grades 1 and 2) to use teaching strategies that are child-centred, interesting and innovative;

- to train approximately one hundred /infant/preparatory teachers as field officers to assist in the training and to implementing these strategies in their own schools and in nearby schools;
- to orient/re-orient headteachers of target schools on the new emphasis on early childhood education so as to ensure a smooth transition across levels.

Expected outcomes

- improved teaching strategies, will be demonstrated by teachers in the first two grades of primary schools;
- improved mastery of basic literacy, numeracy and communication skills by children in the first two grades of primary school
- a 50% or more reduction in the numbers repeating the first two grades of primary school.

Activities

This project has inputs from several units and departments. Overall co-ordination of the project is the responsibility of the Assistant Chief Education Officer, ACEO/Primary, who will works closely with the ACEO/Nursery to ensure a smooth transition from nursery to primary school.

The initial workshops will last for approximately one week, with one-day follow-up meetings at least once a term for three terms. Emphasis is on the orientation or the reorientation of teachers in:

- theories of early childhood development;
- pastoral care and teaching methodologies appropriate for young children;
- establishing appropriate classroom settings.

Monitoring and evaluation of the Project

The procedures for monitoring and evaluating are built into the project. The persons who are trained and the field officers are part of an on-going monitoring team for schools near to their own school. The relevant ACEO's, members of the inspectorate and regional education offices will also be asked to monitor the classroom situation.

The follow-up workshops and data gathered by the monitoring teams assist in the evaluation of the project.

India 1 : Impact of early childhood education on retention in primary grades - a longitudinal study

In eight states of India a longitudinal-cum-cross-sectional study was conducted on a target group of 31,483 primary grade children. Of these children 10,636 had had an ECE programme experience, while 20,847 children had entered directly into the first class of primary school without any previous ECE programme experience.

The objective of the study was to assess the impact of ECE on the subsequent retention of children of in the primary grades by comparing the retention rates of children with ECE experience with those of the `direct entry' group. Some of the major conclusions were as follows:

- Exposure to early childhood education certainly facilitates retention in the primary grades. This impact is evident not only in the initial stages but, in a sustained way, right through the primary grades. The difference in percentages of retention between children with ECE experience and and those with direct entry into school is withen the range of 8.04% to as much as 20.52%.

- The `drop outs profile' that emergies from the study indicates that 31.8% of the children with ECE experience and 48.27% of those without ECE experience drop out of school by class IV. Of these, 55% in the ECE group and 57% in the `Direct Entry' group drop out by Class II. Thus the maximum dropouts occur between Classes 1 and 2. This phenomenon cannot be attributed to economic reasons since a child's `labour value' cannot suddenly get enhanced from age 6 in Class 1 to age 7 in Class 2 leading to the parents' withdrawing the child. A more logical deduction is that the large percentage of dropouts at this stage may be due to the lack of `holding power of the primary schools in terms of both pedagogy and environment. It is concluded that while the ECE experience does help reduce the total number of dropouts, its impact can be maximised by effecting qualitative improvement in terms of child-centered, activity based pedagogy at the early primary stage in addition to providing ECE, to attract and retain children.
- Inter state comparisons indicate greater impact of ECE experience on retention in the states of Bihar, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu as compared to Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Goa. In Madhya Pradesh, on the contrary,the impact is in the reverse direction. This deviant trend may be understood in the context of the kind of ECE programme run under the project in Madhya Pradesh which was considered exceptional in quality as compared to that in the other states. This was particularly so in terms of the inputs given in the form of extermely well qualified and highly paid teachers, who were observed to be conducting high quality programmes in the centres. These programmes which were certainly productive in terms of providing children a sound foundation for development, apparently turned out to be `counterproductive' so far as subsequent retention of children in the primary grades was concerned since the children found the primary school environment very dull and unattractive in comparison to their ECE experience. This could have led to a greater exodus of children from school at this stage. The need, therefore, for ensuring extension of the ECE methodology to the early primary grades cannot be over emphasized.
- Comparison among states in terms of retention rates indicates the higest retention rates for Karnataka and lowest for Rajasthan where almost 42% of the enrolled strength drops out in Class II and 70% by Class IV. In almost all the states an average of 45% to 55% children drop out of school by ClassIV.

India 2 : Promoting primary and elementary education - India's PROPEL Project

Community ownership of education

PROPEL begun in 1979 by the Indian Institute of Education, aims at the universalization of primary and basic education by making communities aware of the need for education. The basic philosophy for PROPEL came from the educationalist J. P. Naik who held that the key to educational success was in community responsibility for education. Communities, he maintained, must value education and be active participants in the educational process in order for a demand for access to education to be made.

Expanding to the entire community: Child Recreation Centres

As parents began to appreciate the value of educating their school-aged children, they also began to see the importance of providing toys and opportunities for play for their younger children. This is what led to the creation of Child Recreation Centres. These are pre-schools which run for two hours every morning and allow 3 to 6 year-olds to enter into the educational process and prepare them for entry into either formal or non-formal primary schools. Teachers report that as a result of time spent in these centres, children enter school with improved social behaviour and physical co-ordination.

Linkages

It can be seen that with the development of primary education, parents' and community awareness of the value of education increased. This triggered off interest and action in the provision of ECDE activities for their younger children. Thus linkages were made, through parents and the community, between primary education and ECDE, resulting in positive changes in children.

Morocco : Koranic pre-schools

The Ministry of Education implemented a nationwide project (1990-1994) for worhers and teachers in Koranic pre-schools, their supervisors, school inspectors, and 3to 5year old children attending Koranic pre-schools.

Linkages

The main objective of this project was to improve educational practice in the Koranic pre-schools in order to respond better to the needs of children, while, at the same time maintaining the role assigned to them by religion and cultural tradition.

Strategies

The main strategies used focused on : expanding the roles of the pre-school teachers particularly in preparing children for their transition to the primary level of education; capacity building in the Department of Primary Education to conceptualize, produce and use low-cost educational materials; establishment of collaboration between personnel of the Koranic pre-schools and the training team of the Alliance de Travail dans la formation at l'Action pour l'Enfance of the Mohammed V University, Faculty of the Science of Education; in-service training programmes for teachers and supervisory staff and establishment of local resource centres for training and the production of materials.

United States of America : *Success for All* - prevention and early intervention

Of the three million children who enter U.S. kindergartens each year, many fail the first grade of schooling. In some urban areas as many as 20% repeat the first grade. There is a decline in motivation in failing students as well as poor self-expectations. This leads to continued poor achievement and eventually dropout etc. .

A programme has been designed to remedy this situation which is known as *Success for All*. It is used in pre-Kindergarten or Kindergarten to third grade. It is implemented in 70 schools in 29 districts in the USA. Almost all are among the most disadvantaged and lowest achieving schools where 75% of the students are from impoverished backgrounds.

Curriculum

Success for All programme elements for pre-kindergarten and kindergarten children, focuses on a child-centred curriculum. It provides children with the necessary foundation for success at later stages of learning, in particular in primary education. The curriculum also encourages language development as well as other aspects in the area of communication.

The curriculum uses integrated, thematic units that integrate reading, pre-writing, mathematics, social studies, science, art, music, games and drama. The main emphasis is on reading since more than 90% of the students have reading difficulties. Story-telling and re-telling, letter recognition and the use of books, dramatization, puppet shows and class libraries are among the means used to develop reading skills. Teachers who work in the programme receive special training. In addition, reading tutors provide one-to-one tutoring. Family support

teams work to ensure co-operation with homes and parents. Student progress is evaluated every two months and adaptations in the students' programmes are made as necessary.

Evaluation

An evaluation of 15 schools in 7 states showed that on average Success for All students are far outperforming control students in reading. The findings also indicated that the reading performance of disadvantaged and at-risk students can be significantly increased when emphasis is given to prevention and early intervention. Retention is also reduced as well as the need for special education. Another finding indicated that the benefits of the programme are greater for those who begin early than they are for those who begin after the first grade. Evaluations stress that focusing on prevention and early intervention can significantly, among other things, reduce retentions and substantially increase the achievement of high-risk children.

While *Success for All* has met with undoubted success, it has proved expensive to implement in its full form.

Some policy issues

In their quest for good quality education and development for all children, Member States are faced with making the most appropriate decisions, based on limited resources. Below are some selected policy issues and some guidelines which may facilitate the decision-making process.

These are based on the premise that there are many inter-related factors, (as highlighted in this paper), contributing to good quality education, which basically stem from the holistic development of the child and the learning process. Furthermore, it should also be understood that the linkages between ECDE and Primary Education should not be seen only as a downward move, i.e. merely as an extension of primary education downwards to cover one or two years preceeding primary school.

Thus some policy issues are:

Funding

This is the major concern of governments since they alone cannot provide all the funds needed for a national provision of ECDE and primary education. Hence other sources must be taped to supplement the governments' contribution. These may include the voluntary sector, parents and communities, foundations, the private sector, international agencies, etc who may provide funds, or in kind contributions.

Provision of ECDE

Provision, in particular of ECDE, may be done in partnership with parents, communities, the private sector, NGOs, Foundations, international agencies, a combination of some of these, etc..

Governments may limit their contribution to giving guidelines, subsidies, providing building and facilities, training of personnel working in an institutional setting, parent education programmes, supervision etc.. Governments should support, facilitate, encourage alternate strategies including non-institutional initiatives.

Curriculum

A national curriculum guide may be formulated based on the learning and developmental needs of children. The guide should be flexible in use and content so that it mat be adapted to the local setting/resources/culture, individual/age group needs and interests, available local materials, use of parents and community members etc.. It should facilate the use and integration of topics/materials initiated or introduced or provided by the children.

Training

It is necessary to understand and cater to children's developmental and learning needs in order to develop and ensure appropriate linkages in provisions for children up to the early grades of primary schools. This may be achieved by offering training to personnel to work with the 0-8/9 year olds instead of separating training for early childhood from training for primary education, while also focusing on the specificity of each level in terms of, for exemple, methodology, approaches, curriculum, etc.

Recognition, status and *salary* should be the same for personnel working at either of the two levels if they have the same training.

Special attention should be given to *recruitment*. It should be based not only on academic background but also on personality and the ability to work with children, families and communities.

School readiness

Children learn and assimilate easily when they are interested, developmentally ready and are motivated. They do not learn when they are forced into meaningless rote learning. Thus it is necessary to focus first and foremost on the child and his readiness and age instead of only on subject matter knowledge, particularly at the pre-school level, i.e. just before entry into primary school. They will then be able to master their environment more readily and effectively thus benefitting from later levels of education and learning. *Children* are,after all, the purpose and channels for making and implementing policies.

Administration & supervision

It is essential to provide for childrens' holistic growth, learning and development in a coordinated manner not in a segmented way whereby e.g. one Ministry focuses on education, another focuses only on health, yet another only on care etc.

Hence it is logical to co-ordinate all interventions. To do so special arrangements need to be implemented e.g. the establishment of a *coordinating body* to coordinate all actions. Another option would be to give the responsibility to one body which will solicit help, advice, as necessary from relevant sources.

Research

It is necessary for governments to build research capacity which focusses on local and national targets, needs and requirements linked to an evaluation mechanism to offer guidance. Care must be given in identifying the producers of the research and the co-ordinating mechanism for those who analysize and use research.

Conclusion

All these examples illustrate the recognition by some Member States of the fact that for the majority of children, the early years of their lives represent an exceptionally important opportunity, and perhaps the only one that they will ever have, to break away from a cycle of poverty, deprivation, wastage and failure. They also point out that a growing number of Member States are aware that action taken early is more cost effective than later remedial measures which may also risk being too late or less effective.

The highlights of the various examples may be summarized as follows :

- The approaches for the promotion of ECDE and Primary Education linkages are both formal and non formal, institutional and non-institutional.
- Emphasis is placed on pedagogical aspects e.g. curriculum development, which are appropriate and relevant to the interest and developmental stage of children. Thus children's love of learning, needed skills and knowledge will be catered to.

- Improvement in the quality of teaching and the qualifications of the teachers to develop and\or ameliorate their professional competences especially their teaching methods.
- Improvement of the organization of activities and programme aimed at making them more appropriate in meeting the developmental needs of children.
- Emphasis on the use of the Early Childhood Development and Education characteristics as a model for the improvement of primary education.
- Recognition of the need for parent education and support in order to avoid conflicting aims in the education of their children
- Emphasis on the cooperation and involvement of parents as important partnersin the education of their children.
- Emphasis on the community as a rich source of human resources to be involved in the educational process and as a gold mine of materials to be used to enrich the curriculum.
- Policy and legislative changes to guide and implement necessary measures in order to improve and provide good quality provisions for children to ensure their harmonious development and education.
- Recognition of the need for coordination among the various Ministries or Bodies as a pre-requisite for the effective implementation of necessary reforms, to avoid duplication or over-lapping and to cater to the holistic development and education of children in a rational manner.
- Recognition of the need and value of using alternative ways of providing ECDE to children.
- Recognition of the fact that governments alone cannot provide everything.
- Recognition of the basic fact that childrens' development is holistic. It is not segmented, all aspects are inter-related and thus affect each other. Hence the need for an integrated approach to providing for children.
- Provisions of activities, programmes etc.for children, to be valid and meaningful, must be in keeping with their interest and developmental stage.

Clearly none of the examples focused specifically on the qualitative improvement of the teacher trainers, but concentrated on the training of teachers. However China recognized that although the teachers in Ganzu province had received training, there was also a need to improve the quality of the training. This was particularly necessary in view of their limited educational background.

Another important pre-requisite for teachers is the need to identify and implement measures needed to upgrade and improve their working conditions and salaries. wages and status. Otherwise these constraints will continue to hamper progress and discourage good students from entering the profession. They will also fail to motivate those already employed to remain in it. The consequences will be serious for children, for the educational systems, for governments and for society. After all teachers are one of the basic elements essential for the provision of good quality education,in influencing children and in facilitating their harmonious development.

It is clear from the evidence reviewed that a variety of approaches is being used to establish linkages between Early Childhood Development and Education and Primary Education. Some worthwhile beginnings have been made. However more careful consideration needs to be given to the cost implications for governments of the establishments of such services-especially for developing countries. The question of educational priorities must also be studied since it is well known that many developing countries allocate a much higher percentage of their budgets to higher education than they do to the early years of learning. Future research may need to concentrate much more on the content of programmes, particularly in so far as health, nutrition and parental involvement are concerned. Studies will also have to depend less on the anecdotal reports of teachers and school principals and use more scientific approaches to evaluation and assessment.

Education is a life-long process. It is not provided in a vacuum. Education is furnished by a variety of people and influences. These include parents, the community, teachers, the media among others. Social, economic and cultural considerations also have a bearing on education as does the physical and emotional well-being of the learner. All these factors play a part in the development and education of the individual. Hence the links between them are of major importance in the promotion of achievement in learning, as well as in children's development

It is well known that the earliest years of a child's life are decisive for his/her subsequent learning and development. Early Childhood Development and Education is the first and most important phase of the life long learning process. The effective linkages between the home and the school, between the community and the school, between the various forms of early childhood development and education and the primary school are, therefore, essential if access to learning is to be ensured, if it is to be of the requisite standard, and if it is to be meaningful.

This paper has attempted to describe some of the efforts that are being made in different parts of the world to strengthen the links needed in the earliest years of development and education. It is intended to stimulate interest in this field and to encourage the exchange of information on the approaches being used.

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